

April 14, 2022

To: Kasson Township Planning Commission

From: Anne Magoun, Kasson Township resident (8514 S Dunns Farm Road)

Comments on Kasson Township Master Plan Draft v. 4 (January, 2022)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft of the Master Plan for Kasson Township. I am sorry not to be able to present my comments in person.

I have been a year-round resident of the township since 2013 and have been a regular seasonal visitor to the Glen Lake area since 1982 and a summer visitor to northwest lower Michigan since 1954. I chose to raise my children in this area, living in Traverse City from 1990 to 2010.

I realize that a significant amount of work went into preparing this document, and I appreciate the dedicated public service of the Planning Commission and the Township Board. The draft shows sincere concern for the future of the township as well as appreciation for the natural beauty of our home community. I hope that the final plan will help guide decision-makers in the township for years to come.

My comments are made in an effort to improve the current draft of this plan, recognizing that this is not only an expression of community concerns and priorities but also a public face of Kasson Township now and in the future. At some point, it will become a document of historical record. For these reasons, I urge careful editing and proofreading before adoption.

My comments can be classified as 1) grammatical (including spelling, word order, syntax, and punctuation); 2) structural (including chapter headings and overall framework of the plan); and 3) substantive, which refer to the content and intent of the plan. The substantive issues also address topics that have not been included in the plan, which I respectfully suggest should be part of the plan. I realize that not everyone shares my views, but I hope they will be considered.

The “proofreading” comments are marked on a copy of the draft of the plan that I have submitted and don’t need public attention.

The structural comments recommend adding section headings (“Basis for Plan” for Chapters 1–6 and “Goals & Policies” for Chapters 7–12). I believe Chapter 7 should be renamed “Environment.” I submit a suggested outline for section and chapter headings.

My substantive comments are of two kinds: concerns about what is said in the plan and concerns about what is left out.

What is left out:

1) I am sorry that there is nothing in the document that acknowledges or supports any of the creative arts. All over Leelanau County, we see the benefits of all kinds of artistic involvement. Kasson Township shouldn’t presume that there is no role for the township to encourage artistic expression, especially if it helps to support local business. Just putting it in the plan as a positive type of business would be a form of encouragement.

2) It surprises me that the concept of sustainability is not directly acknowledged as a goal or objective. Sustainability requires concerted community action, not just individual decision-making. We continue to learn about good farming and woodlot management practices that help make land more valuable.

Protecting our air and water (surface and groundwater) is essential to the long-term health of humans, wildlife, and plant life. Kasson Township should begin to address the problem of dysfunctional, worn out or overtaxed septic facilities (I hesitate to call all of them “systems,” since many facilities were constructed long before healthy modern practices were developed).

The beauty and importance of our forests are recognized in the plan, but the devastating effects of diseases that are killing so many of our trees (beech, oak, hemlock, birch, maple, ash) aren’t mentioned. Hillsides of dead and dying trees become disaster zones.

3) The concept of public stewardship seems to be missing from the plan. We can’t just hold our breath and hope that nothing will change. Air, water, plants, and wildlife are all experiencing effects of human civilization and of climate instability. The plan recognizes impending effects of population increases, even though Kasson Township hasn’t experienced soaring rates of growth. Similarly, the plan should recognize impending effects of climate instability, even though we haven’t yet felt the worst. There is nothing in the plan that indicates any efforts to reduce fossil fuel use or to encourage earth-friendly practices.

4) Low-impact recreational opportunities are not supported or encouraged (I’m thinking of bicycling and hiking, also cross-country skiing and snowmobiling). Survey respondents stated that they aren’t in favor of adding to parks, but clearly residents are aware of and appreciate the beauty of the area. Maybe there are untapped approaches to recreation that would be appropriate for the township to encourage in the next twenty years.

5) Short-term rentals are coming. Nothing in the plan acknowledges the effect of this kind of tourism on our resources and our communities. A more stable community is a more respectful community, tied to the land and to one another.

My specific comments about what is in the plan continue below. In general, the plan seems to reflect the sentiment of people who make Kasson Township their home. Overall, I endorse the goals and objectives of maintaining the rural character of our community.

Page 1

The plan gives the population increase of Leelanau County between 2010 and 2020 as 3% but does not give Kasson Township’s population increase over that time: just under 2.5%.

Page 4

A respectable response rate of 32% to the community survey is indicated. It appears that the rest of this chapter discusses information derived from survey responses, not the township as a whole (understandably). In the middle of this page, the data would be more accurately labeled:

“Results showed the following for how long residents survey respondents had lived in the township:”

Similarly, the last paragraph could indicate that “~~The township population is~~ Survey respondents are divided almost evenly...”

Page 11

2nd paragraph: “Therefore, this Land Use Plan defines a Gravel Mining District.” Is this district different from previous plans?

I commend the commission for recognizing the need to continue to exert local authority over the Gravel Mining District.

Page 18

1st line, missing word: "The northwest half of the _?_ is underlain..." Probably the missing word is "township" but who knows?

Page 22

Policies & Actions #5: "The township shall ~~do everything possible to~~ encourage and aid farming..." This is very strong language and could be used against the township if some undesirable farm development were to be proposed or if unreasonably expensive supports for farming were demanded by farmers.

Page 23

Policies & Actions #7: Comment similar to previous one (page 22). Last sentence ends "...shall be discouraged ~~by all means~~." I would strike the last three words without losing any options for action.

Page 24

I haven't found documentation supporting the statement that "Both full and part-time residency is increasing rapidly in the township." I do not dispute the goal, but it would be good to provide documentation.

Page 26

Long Term Objectives "D." I suggest "To continue to ~~provide~~ allow a variety of housing for all economic levels..." The township hasn't been in the business of providing housing. Maybe it should be "to provide housing options for all economic levels..."

Page 27

Under list of the township's many assets, I would add: "Good bicycling and snowmobiling terrain;"

I would also expand on the last item in the assets list, stating that "Seasonal residents generally have a lower than average demand for government services."

2nd to last paragraph, discussing recreation: Road cycling has become a very popular, low-impact activity (April through October), and the township can be an attractive cycling destination.

Page 31

Policies & Actions #11: I suggest modifying "Be willing to work with them to bring appropriate projects to fruition."

Page 32

It might be wise to acknowledge that in recent years, e-bikes have become a popular form of recreational transportation and that Kasson Township is likely to see more and more of them on our roads. There may even be business opportunities related to electric bicycles.

Last paragraph before Long Term Objectives: The first part of the sentence is not needed and sounds unnecessarily dismissive of bicyclists. "In order to encourage greater use and to provide safer and better means for the many bicyclists [not "bikers," which often refers to motorcyclists] who travel through Kasson Township..."

Page 34

Policies & Actions #7: I would not have the plan imply limitations on the categories of person (those without autos or unable to use them because of handicaps) who would want to or need to use

Bay Area Transit Authority services. It makes economic and environmental sense to have more people using public transportation when feasible. Before covid-19, I rode the bus to/from Traverse City whenever I could to save a car trip.

Page 35

It would be appropriate to develop Long Term Objectives and Policies & Actions for this chapter, especially with regard to ground water protection, storm water management, and wetlands protection.

As written, however, because there are no Long Term Objectives or Policies & Actions in this section, I suggest that if it is going to be left as is, it should be moved out of the Goals & Policies portion of the plan. That said, these are my comments here:

3rd from last paragraph: It is difficult to understand this paragraph. Second sentence seems out of place; the third sentence refers to “that objective,” but I don’t know what objective is being referred to. Should it say “that ordinance” instead of “that objective”?

2nd to last paragraph (groundwater pollution): What are the findings of periodic tests of the groundwater? Who sees them? Who is responsible for any remediation? Who is affected by contaminated water? It seems that this would be a concern of the entire township and deserves more attention in a forward-looking plan.

Last paragraph (discouraging alternative energy generation facilities): This statement seems out of step with good planning and is unnecessarily negative. It would be more appropriate to *encourage* low-impact alternative energy generation facilities in the township on land that is less suitable for farming or timber. Alternative energy generation can be lucrative, bringing money into the township.